

the need for all Parties to meet their responsibilities under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Industrialized countries should reduce their emissions and developing countries should participate meaningfully in global efforts to address climate change.

We underscore the continuing leadership of Central America in advancing implementation of the Framework Convention on Climate Change and in the evolution of the Clean Development Mechanism for implementation of climate-friendly projects, including clean energy development and the enhancement of carbon sinks. Building on the commitment of the San Jose Declaration, we recognize the importance of the actions that are being developed in Central America with the participation of our private sectors, especially those that will permit the concession of credits and other initiatives that will mitigate greenhouse gas emissions.

Recognizing the impact of climatic disturbances in the region, we agree that key components in the mitigation of disasters and in sustainable development include improved management of watersheds, reforestation, preservation of coastal wetlands, and efforts to prevent soil erosion through improved farming practices. It is, therefore, important to strengthen mechanisms of cooperation in the areas of natural disaster prevention and mitigation through education, training, institutional strengthening, and the transfer of technology.

We, the Presidents of Costa Rica, El Salvador, the United States of America, Honduras, Nicaragua, and the Dominican Republic, and the Prime Minister of Belize, express our sincere gratitude for the hospitality shown to us by the people and Government of Guatemala during our sojourn in this historic city.

NOTE: The joint statement was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary but was not issued as a White House press release. An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

## **Statement on Selection of the Director of the National Institutes of Health Vaccine Research Center**

*March 11, 1999*

I am very pleased to join Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala, National Institutes of Health Director Harold Varmus, and my AIDS policy office director, Sandra Thurman, in welcoming Dr. Gary Nabel as the first Director of the new Vaccine Research Center at the NIH. Dr. Nabel's long and distinguished career as a research scientist will be an incredible asset in our efforts to find preventative vaccines.

The first order of business for Dr. Nabel will be the effort to develop a vaccine for HIV. This is a top priority of our AIDS research efforts. Here in the United States, over 40,000 people are newly infected with HIV every year. Across the world, the rate is nearly 6 million people per year. These are lives in jeopardy. Though we have made remarkable progress in treating HIV and AIDS, there is still no cure. So our best hope of bringing an end to the AIDS pandemic is to find a safe and effective vaccine.

I have issued a challenge to the scientific community to find an AIDS vaccine within the decade. We are making important strides towards that critical goal and the leadership of Dr. Nabel will help us progress even more. Dr. Varmus and his team of expert researchers at the NIH, working in collaboration with scientists from across the globe, have produced remarkable results in reducing AIDS mortality here and in many other developed nations. Their improved understanding of how HIV works will be invaluable in the effort to find a vaccine to prevent infection in the first place.

The human tragedy of AIDS throughout the world must move all of us to action. The search for a vaccine for HIV must continue to be a global priority because millions of precious lives hang in the balance.

**Statement on the Kennedy-Murray  
Amendment to Proposed Education  
Flexibility Partnership Legislation**

*March 11, 1999*

I have long supported the ed-flex concept, and I was pleased when the congressional leadership decided to take up this bill as one of its first matters of business. Today, however, the Senate used this bill to undermine one of our most important educational achievements—an initiative to hire 100,000 well-prepared teachers to reduce class size in the early grades to a national average of 18. The Senate not only voted down an amendment to ensure long-term funding for this initiative but passed an amendment that would allow local school districts to completely opt out of class size reduction. I will work hard for the elimination of this amendment in conference. We should be working together to make continued progress on obvious national needs such as reducing class size—not attempting to tear down the bipartisan work we did last year to address this problem.

**Statement on House Action To  
Support Use of United States  
Armed Forces in Kosovo**

*March 11, 1999*

I am pleased with the House vote which demonstrates the broad, bipartisan support for our efforts to bring peace to Kosovo. This vote sends a clear message to both parties that it is time now to sign an agreement that stops the fighting in Kosovo and creates real self-government for the Kosovar people. The vote confirms the strong commitment of the United States to continue our efforts to provide the leadership necessary to bring about a peaceful resolution to this conflict.

**Proclamation 7173—National Older  
Workers Employment Week, 1999**

*March 11, 1999*

*By the President of the United States  
of America*

**A Proclamation**

One of our Nation's most valuable but least appreciated assets is its workers aged 55 and older. Older Americans bring to the workplace sound judgment, broad knowledge and experience, proven problem-solving abilities, and a strong work ethic. Despite their often impressive qualifications, however, older men and women who attempt to change jobs or seek new careers frequently encounter difficulties. Some employers mistakenly fear that older workers lack the skills and flexibility to learn new technologies and procedures; others think that they no longer have the energy and motivation to compete in today's fast-paced and stressful work environment; still others are unwilling to pay older workers the salaries they deserve and prefer instead to hire younger, less experienced employees at lower rates. Such employers are short-sighted.

Americans are living longer, healthier, more active lives. In the next century, as our economy continues to expand and the demand for skilled workers continues to grow, older citizens will become an increasingly vital resource. If our Nation is to thrive in the 21st century, we must encourage businesses to recognize the rich potential of older workers, to make the most of their knowledge, skills, and experience, and to retain qualified older employees in the workforce.

We must also remain vigilant in protecting the rights and well-being of older Americans. Laws such as the Age Discrimination Act, the Older Americans Act, and the Age Discrimination in Employment Act protect older workers from age bias and discrimination and help assure their fair treatment in the workplace. In addition, the Department of Labor and the Department of Health and Human Services, through such efforts as the Senior